
THE CASTLE MEDICAL GROUP

Newsletter

Issue 1 - June 2001

Welcome to the first newsletter of The Castle Medical Group, which was formed on 1 April 2000, and brought together the former Railway View and Castle Medical Practices.

We felt that it was time to remind patients of our services and inform people of things that are going on at the moment within the practice.

The Doctors

By Phil Mileham

There are now 8 doctors joined in partnership to form The Castle Medical Group (6 full-time and 2 part-time), and we also employ 3 part-time doctors as Assistants in General Practice:

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|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dr Anne S Huson | Full Time Partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dr Sheila Bailey | Part Time Partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dr Martin Flatley | Full Time Partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dr Richard Freeman | Part Time Partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dr Ron Higson | Full Time Partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dr Ian Ibbotson | Full Time Partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dr William Mackean | Full Time Partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dr John Saunders | Full Time Partner |
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 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dr Nikki Bywater | Part Time Assistant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dr Gill Hodgson | Part Time Assistant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dr Susie Hutchison | Part Time Assistant |

We look after a list size of over 14000 patients.

Appointments

By Phil Mileham

One of the biggest problems facing health services is waiting times - we hear a great deal about hospital waiting times, but doctors in General Practice are finding it difficult to keep up with demand too.

Patients are rightly unhappy about having to wait more than a week for a routine appointment and something must be done.

Of course, we do need more doctors and nurses, but they are expensive, and we don't have anywhere to put them in Clitheroe (more of that later).

We can make changes within the practice to improve matters, and we are doing a lot of work at the moment:

- We have already increased the number of employed doctors who together provide the equivalent of 1 1/2 extra people.

- We have employed more locum doctors over the year to cover holidays and other absences
- We are planning to increase the involvement of nurses in the practice, and encourage patients to use our nursing services
- We are planning to re-organise the working week, so that we can meet periods of higher demand (such as Mondays) better
- We are planning to make it easier for patients to speak to a doctor by telephone rather than coming to the surgery

Our receptionists are under a great deal of pressure from patients and the doctors, and have a very difficult job to do - often facing abuse from patients when there are few appointments.

Some people understandably get upset with the receptionist when asked a series of questions before getting an appointment. In truth, this is because we are "prioritising" - trying to place patients with greatest need in the earliest appointments, which means others waiting longer.

We also know that many people come to see a doctor with things that can often be dealt with better by a nurse - and sometimes, with access to telephone advice, it may not be necessary for a patient to come to the surgery at all.

We are also going to ask patients to fill in a questionnaire to get their views - the worry about this is that most people say..... "just get more doctors"

I hope that we are able to make some improvements to our services in the coming months.

Health Centre Improvements

By Phil Mileham

You may have read in the Advertiser and Times that some improvements are being made to the health centre this year - these include an extra consulting room for each practice, a waiting area for the treatment room, some extra filing space, an extension to the dispensary and alterations to the front car park.

These are short-term improvements, which should keep the building going for another 5 or more years. Plans to build a new Primary Care Centre have been "put on hold" since 1995, but are about to be looked at again, as there are new government initiatives to improve GP premises in the next few years.

The doctors, together with the Ribble Valley Primary Care Group and Communicare NHS Trust, are to re-start the project this year. The initial work will look at the services required by the local population, options for the location of a new building, and how it will be funded.

Progress will be reported later in the year.

"Step-in" - Young People's Health Services **by Dr Wendy Higson**

This is a new service especially designed for young people. It offers confidential advice, information and support including a sexual health/contraception service.

Every Wednesday
Clitheroe Health Centre
3.30 - 6.00 p.m.

Look for the "Step-in" signs. No appointment necessary. Staff include doctor, nurses, receptionist and youth worker.

The Continence Clinic **By Staff Nurse Sarah Smith**

There is support available for patients with continence problems. Staff Nurse Smith and her colleagues are currently running a clinic at the health centre and may be contacted in the strictest confidence on 01200 421837.

Please remember that you are not alone - there are an estimated 3 million sufferers in the UK (and probably a lot more!)

Long Haul Flights **By Sister Merle Allen**

Recent media attention has focused on the dangers of sitting in a cramped position for long periods of time, in an aircraft.

No reliable statistics or research data are available at present to aid medical staff in providing the best advice to patients who intend to fly long haul.

Patients who have had problems with their circulation in the past do need specialist advice for long flights, but the vast majority of travellers should be fine if they take a few sensible precautions:

- ❑ Avoid dehydration - drink lots of non-alcoholic and caffeine-free drinks
- ❑ Wear loose, comfortable clothes to prevent constriction of blood vessels which would slow down the circulation
- ❑ Keep moving - at least hourly. Stand up and stretch. When standing, raise up and down on your toes. When sitting, move your feet about. Both these exercises activate the "calfpump" which drags blood up the legs
- ❑ If possible, put your feet on something e.g. a bag, to relieve the pressure on your blood vessels caused by the seat pressing on the back of your legs
- ❑ Avoid crossing your legs, which compresses blood vessels even more

- ❑ If you have varicose veins, support socks or stockings may be helpful

Many people ask about taking Aspirin before flying. Aspirin is not thought to be helpful in preventing clot formation in the veins. Deep Venous Thrombosis (DVT) is the risk most associated with stagnation of blood in the legs - Aspirin is normally given to prevent clots in the arteries.

If you feel that you must take an Aspirin, then a low dose of 75 mg could be taken 24 hours before the flight. You should not take Aspirin if you have or have had stomach ulcers, or problems taking Aspirin in the past. Worries about the interaction of Aspirin with any other medication you are taking should be addressed to your pharmacist.

The Morning After Pill **By Dr Anne Huson**

There has recently been a significant amount of publicity about the "Morning After Pill" being available from chemists. Whilst we appreciate that some women may prefer to buy it from chemists, we would like to make you aware of the following facts:

- ❑ All the doctors in this practice prescribe the Morning After Pill
- ❑ The Morning After Pill is available to any woman regardless of her age
- ❑ The Morning After Pill can be prescribed to girls under 16 years of age in complete confidence, using guidelines that have been established for many years
- ❑ The Morning After Pill is effective if taken within 72 hours following unprotected sexual intercourse. It is, however, most effective when taken as soon as possible after the event
- ❑ If you require the Morning After Pill please ask the receptionist for an urgent appointment. If you feel you can explain what it is about it certainly helps to fast-track you through the appointment system. If not, please just say that it is about a confidential matter
- ❑ At weekends there is an Emergency Surgery on a Saturday morning, and at other times women requiring this service should phone the practice number during the daytime, when appropriate arrangements will be made

As doctors, we hope that our patients would feel free to come and discuss all aspects of contraception with us and our Practice Nurses.



If you have any comments about our newsletter, or any ideas for future articles, please contact Phil Mileham (Practice Manager)